

PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes of Meeting  
June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019

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The meeting was called to order by President Stephanie Najjar at 7:00pm. President Najjar noted the meeting was being recorded by Recording Secretary Allison Lytle.

As there was a quorum present, the roll call was taken:

**Present**

Anne Quinn  
Stephanie Najjar  
Dianne Caputo  
Wes Merrill  
Jean Ahearn  
Thomas Pappas  
Frances Bisazza-Gallugi  
Richard Shruhan  
Kate O'Brien  
Sandra Fecteau

**Absent**

Don McAllister

Prior to welcoming Peabody Mayor Edward A. Bettencourt, the Board discussed the proposed budget cuts which the Mayor would be addressing that evening. In response to a question from the Board, Library Director Melissa Robinson reported that the previous year they had received \$65,000 in state aid, which they would lose if they lost certification. Therefore, the proposed \$155,000 budget cut from the city would be compounded by the approximately \$65,000 lost from state aid. The Library would also lose their ability to write certain grants which would be an additional loss of funds.

Trustee Jean Ahearn inquired as to whether or not the Library always had to use state aid in order to meet their minimum materials requirements for state certification. Director Robinson stated that they were required to spend 12% of their actual budget on books and materials, and that year they spent \$12,400 from state aid to reach that requirement.

In response to a question from the Board, Director Robinson stated that should the budget cuts total the proposed \$155,000, the Library would mainly address the cuts by closing the branches earlier and not filling open staff positions including the Senior Public Services Librarian position recently vacated by Cate Merlin, a library aide position in the creativity lab and a part-time library assistant.

The Board of Trustees welcomed Peabody Mayor Edward Bettencourt to the meeting.

Mayor Bettencourt thanked the Trustees for the invitation to speak with them that evening and thanked them for all of their hard work and dedication over the years. Mayor Bettencourt stated that it had been a really rough stretch for the City in terms of the budget. Mayor Bettencourt stated that while every year had its challenges, that year was the most difficult one primarily because of a \$6.7 million gap in the education budget. Mayor Bettencourt explained the gap in the education budget was primarily due to the increased cost of special education, unexpected transportation costs due to a change in the law, health insurance costs and salary increases.

Mayor Bettencourt stated that as they were reviewing the budgets of the school department, city, police, fire, library and parks and recreation, they tried to minimize the impact of the budget cuts across the city because their core resources were important. Mayor Bettencourt stated that he thought the library services were top notch but the budget issues that year necessitated cuts. Mayor Bettencourt reported they were eliminating positions in the City by not filling vacant positions as his goal was to avoid people losing their jobs. Through that process, the City would be cutting 1.5 positions in the fire department, 2 DPW positions, 2 administrative positions at City Hall, a number in the education department, and 1 police officer. Mayor Bettencourt stated that the goal was to not put anyone out of work but people would lose hours.

Mayor Bettencourt reported that the goal when it came to the Library was to not have to close the branches, and not have anyone lose their job. Mayor Bettencourt reported Library Director Melissa Robinson was well prepared and advocated on behalf of the Library, in particular with regards to keeping the branches open. Mayor Bettencourt recognized that they were fortunate to have three branches which provided a lot of services to people throughout the City. While the branches would not be closed, there would be some cuts made to the hours at the branches here and there and reduced hours over the summer. Mayor Bettencourt stated that they had to make those tough decisions.

Mayor Bettencourt stated he believed that the budget the next fiscal year would be better than the upcoming year. In response to a question from the Board, Mayor Bettencourt stated he believed next year would be better because previously there were things that were not budgeted for properly, such as health care, on the school side. The issue which would be rectified the following year. Mayor Bettencourt stated he also felt the City would be in a better situation with the projects going on as well. The North Shore Mall fees would be coming in the next year and they would also finish paying the fees for borrowing water when the City's water treatment plant burned down the previous year. Mayor Bettencourt stated because of those issues and various other factors; he thought the City would experience a rosier financial outlook next year.

President Stephanie Najjar reported the Library was potentially seeing an 8.8% cut to its budget and inquired as to what percentage other city departments would see. Mayor Bettencourt stated he did not have the percentages available to him that evening.

President Najjar reported the Board's biggest concern was that if they were to have a cut of over \$70,000, the Library would not meet their requirement for state certification and becoming decertified was concerning on many different levels and not something to be taken lightly. President Najjar stated they were a respected library whose staff were asked to speak at many workshops and events and losing their certification could affect their credibility. President Najjar stated that on top of that they served many, many people in the City including the underserved teen population who spent a lot of time in the Library, particularly given that there was no teen center in the City. Should the Library lose its certification, not only would it lose the amount proposed by the City but they would also lose the state aid as they would no longer be eligible. President Najjar reported they received \$65,000 in state aid last year so the Library was looking at an approximately \$210,000 cut in their budget in total and a cut of that size would affect the Library's ability to service the community.

Trustee Anne Quinn inquired as to why the City was blindsided that year in terms of the unexpected costs and budget challenges.

Mayor Bettencourt stated that two of the main factors for the City's budgetary issues that year included the \$2.5 million payment that needed to be made as a result of the fire at the water treatment plant, and the increased costs to transportation and special education, which totaled \$1.5 million. Mayor Bettencourt explained they had a couple of students, including one who required 24-hour care, who moved into the City that year. The City was responsible for the costs of those students which totaled approximately \$500,000 for the year. The City had not budgeted for that unexpected expense. Mayor Bettencourt explained that there was also a change to state law which increased the transportation costs in the City by \$600,000. Mayor Bettencourt explained the City was now required to pay for the transportation costs to and from school for any student who was homeless, considered homeless, or was in foster care. Previously, those costs were covered by the state. Mayor Bettencourt reported the City of Peabody had approximately 100 students who were in that category; therefore, the City was now responsible for an additional \$600,000 in transportation costs. Mayor Bettencourt reported that while the City budgeted for some increase in special education, health insurance, etc., those aforementioned increases were unexpected.

In response to a question from the Board, Mayor Bettencourt stated that yes other cities and towns in the area were facing budgetary issues that year. Mayor Bettencourt reported the change to the transportation law had caused a lot of problems and was a big topic of discussion at a recent mayors' conference that he attended.

Mayor Bettencourt acknowledged that this was the worst budgetary crisis he had faced but stated that he did believe it would be better the following year. Mayor Bettencourt stated that he believed, based on his conversations with Director Robinson, the Library would qualify for the waiver and he would support the Library's application for the waiver in any way possible.

The Board of Trustees inquired as to whether or not the budget cuts were equitable across city departments as that was one of the criteria in order to qualify for a waiver. Mayor Bettencourt stated he did not have the percentages at that time.

Trustee Dianne Caputo stated her concern that should the City close the South and West Branch Libraries they would never be re-opened. Mayor Bettencourt stated he would not close the branches and when that possibility was brought up, it was a non-starter. Mayor Bettencourt reported they would need to cut hours at the branches, but closing the branches was not an option. Mayor Bettencourt stated the Library would need to have trust in him that the branches would not close.

The Board stated that even cutting the hours to the branches was detrimental to the population they served, including teens with nowhere else to go, lower income families, and new immigrants. Cutting hours meant cutting down access for many important populations in the City.

Mayor Bettencourt stated that while he understood that the cuts were difficult, he did not see any other options. Mayor Bettencourt stated that, in truth, if he was able to find the \$80,000 the Library was asking him not to cut, that money would go to a police officer or a teacher. Mayor Bettencourt stated that while his position would not change, he understood why the Library felt they needed to go the City Council and advocate for their position. Mayor Bettencourt stated he was not happy the Library was facing potential decertification and it was certainly nothing to be proud of as the Mayor.

Trustee Jean Ahearn reported the Library had always had to use state aid in order to spend 12% of their budget on books and subscriptions so the Library had never been fully funded in a way.

Mayor Bettencourt stated that he was invested in the Library succeeding as he wanted to turn St. Paul's into a children's museum which would partner with the Library. Mayor Bettencourt stated he thought that was an important initiative to him and thought it would be great for the City.

Mayor Bettencourt stated he would look into a couple of things before he presented the budget on Tuesday, June 11<sup>th</sup> to the City Council. Director Robinson confirmed for the Mayor that the Library could absorb a cut of up to \$70,000 without it affecting their certification; anything over that amount would lead to decertification and they would need to apply for a waiver. Mayor Bettencourt reported he did not want the Library to take a step back and would look into a couple of possibilities prior to the budget presentation on Tuesday. Mayor Bettencourt stated he would follow up with the Library Director by the end of the week.

The Board thanked the Mayor for his time that evening. Mayor Bettencourt left the meeting at 8:05pm.

### **Approval of the minutes from the previous meeting**

A **MOTION** was made by Kate O'Brien to approve the minutes of the May 6, 2019 meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Richard Shruhan. A vote was taken.

All in Favor: Yes. Any Opposed: No. The motion was unanimously approved.



## **Receipt of Communications**

President Najjar stated there was no communication on which to report.

## **Director's Report**

Director Melissa Robinson presented the following report and provided the Trustees in attendance with written copies for their information.

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### **Director's Report to the Board of Library Trustees** **June 2019**

#### **Staffing**

Today is Cate Merlin's first day as Assistant Director.

Full-time custodian Sean Meagher has returned from medical leave and is back to full duty.

Unelia Videira, Alys Hayden and Yahaira Cosme remain out on parental leave. Yahaira is scheduled to return on June 10<sup>th</sup>.

Library Assistant Bridget Keown has resigned effective Friday, June 7<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Keown recently completed her PhD program and has accepted a faculty position at a university in Pittsburgh.

Senior South Branch Librarian Morgan Yeo has resigned effective June 22<sup>nd</sup>. Morgan has accepted a position at the Abbott Public Library in Marblehead as the Head of Public Services. This position is an administrative position equivalent to assistant director.

After 18 years of service to PIL, Senior Community Relations and Public Programming Librarian Kelley Unger has resigned effective July 6<sup>th</sup>. Kelley is pursuing a career as a yoga instructor.

I will begin discussions with Human Resources and the Mayor about how to handle these vacancies after the budget is finalized in the next couple of weeks.

Public Services Librarian Sharon Janus completed two courses this semester towards her Bachelor's Degree. The Board preapproved a tuition reimbursement of \$500 in January and I am requesting that you vote tonight to release those funds. The money will come from the personnel budget.

A reminder that next all staff meeting will be Monday, June 10<sup>th</sup>. The Main Library will be closed from 9-11am and the branches from 9am-12pm. The topics of this meeting will be the new web-based circulation system NOBLE is launching this month, the FY20 budget and navigating Peabody's local history collection.

### **Building & Grounds**

The Elevator: City Elevator visited to investigate the elevator not leveling out properly. Their solution was to slow the car way down. That seems to have resolved the leveling issue.

West Branch Windows: Two of the three new windows at the West Branch are now installed. Unfortunately, the third window does not fit. The windows were custom made to fit the casings and it appears that the measuring error was made by the City. The Director of Facilities has ordered a new window. Until that is installed, the opening has been boarded up.

### **Budget**

An updated budget is available for your review and questions if any.

I continue to work with Human Resources, the Mayor, the union and Assistant Director Merlin to come up with a plan for how to implement the budget cuts.

The Board needs to vote this evening to authorize the expenditure of the FY20 State Aide to Public Library funds. This is assuming that the Library receives State Aide as normal. Indicators show that State Aid to Public Libraries line item will increase, but it's unclear still how much of an increase we would see. Based on the award from last year, I would propose that the Board approve the following conditional breakdown of spending.

Here is my proposed breakdown:

Utilities	\$5,000 (8%)
Operating	\$12,000 (16%)
Books	\$13,400 (20%)
Audubon	\$11,000 (18%)
Programs	\$10,000 (16%)
Building	\$8,600 (14%)
Public technology	\$5,000 (8%)

Recent changes to the State Aide certification requirements allows us to count some of our public technology expenses towards our materials requirement. As such, we have cut some electronic resources (that were previously considered part of our materials budget) for FY20 due to poor usage and I am requesting that the Trustees relocate that money to public technology. Our need to update computers and peripherals consistently outpaces the annual equipment budget allocated by the City (\$8,000/year).

### **Program and Activities**

The resignations of Kelley Unger and Morgan Yeo, along with the budget uncertainty is leading us to cancel many adult programs for the summer months. We will do our best to resume a more active program schedule in the fall, although we will not have a fall events brochure since Kelley is the one who produces them. Senior Teen Services Librarian Aubrey Apodaca has agreed to take over creating

the events brochure going forward.

Senior Teen Services Librarian Aubrey Apodaca has received a \$2,000 grant from the Mass Board of Library Commissioners to offer a two-week long program focused on exploratory music learning for teens this summer.

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Director Robinson also reported the American Federation of Teachers and the City of Peabody had agreed to a contract for Fiscal Year 2019 – 2021. The contract included a 2% cost of living increase for assistant librarians, librarians and senior librarians and extra step increases for all of those positions as well. Director Robinson reported the library aides would receive a \$1.00/hour rate increase from last September which would be paid retroactively, and an additional \$1.00/hour rate increase again in September 2019. Director Robinson reported the contract was signed by Library President Stephanie Najjar and Mayor Bettencourt.

In response to a question from the Board, Director Robinson stated that unfortunately the Summer Events Brochure was not accurate at that point because they would have to cut some programming, mainly because they did not have the staff available to work on those programs.

A **MOTION** was made by Richard Shruhan to accept the Director's Report as presented. The motion was seconded by Jean Ahearn. A vote was taken.

All in Favor: Yes. Any Opposed: No. The motion was unanimously approved.

### **Reports of the Committees**

**BUILDINGS & GROUNDS:** Committee Chair Wes Merrill stated there was nothing to report in addition to the report provided by the Library Director.

**AUDUBON PRINTS:** Committee Chair Richard Shruhan stated there was nothing new on which to report.

**PERSONNEL:** As Committee Chair Don McAllister was not present, there was no new report.

**POLICY AND PROCEDURES:** Committee Chair Jean Ahearn stated there was nothing new on which to report.

**LIAISON TO THE FRIENDS OF THE PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY:** Liaison Dianne Caputo stated there was nothing new on which to report.

**LIAISON TO THE PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY FOUNDATION:** Liaison Anne Quinn reported the Foundation canceled the *Birds and Bubbly* event which was scheduled for Friday, June 7<sup>th</sup> due to lack of ticket sales. Trustee Quinn reported the next meeting of the Board was scheduled for Wednesday, June 19<sup>th</sup> at 6pm and the Foundation was still in the process of looking for new Directors. Trustee Quinn reported she sent out a note to all Foundation Directors and Trustees asking for names of anyone they thought might be interested in joining the Board. Trustee Quinn requested the names by Friday, June 7<sup>th</sup>.

**LIAISON TO THE PEABODY HISTORICAL SOCIETY:** Liaison Thomas Pappas reported he attended the Peabody Historical Society's annual meeting at the Smith Barn where he sat with Historical Society President Dick St. Pierre and Bill Power. Trustee Pappas reported the Treasurer presented a budget report and the PHS was solvent. Awards were also given out. Trustee Pappas reported the PHS had no presentations scheduled until September.

A **MOTION** was made by Tom Pappas to accept the Committee reports as presented. The motion was seconded Richard Shruhan. A vote was taken.

All in Favor: Yes. Any Opposed: No. The motion was unanimously approved.

## **Unfinished Business**

### **DISCUSSION OF TRUSTEES LETTER TO THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL REGARDING BUDGET CUTS**

President Najjar provided the Board with copies of four letters that were drafted by Anne Quinn, Jean Ahearn and herself. President Najjar requested the Board review the letters and then they would work together to compile them and draft the final letter which would be sent to the City Council.

The Board discussed the timing of when to send the letter to City Council given the discussion they just had with Mayor Bettencourt. The Board agreed it should wait until after the Mayor spoke with Director Robinson regarding the final decision on the cuts. The best-case scenario would be that he reduced the cut the Library would experience and then the letter would be unnecessary. Should the cuts still go forward as proposed (\$155,000), President Najjar would email the final letter to the City Councilors, along with the attachments of the Library fact sheet compiled by Director Robinson and Why Certification Matters from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. President Najjar stated she would CC the Mayor when she sent the letter to the Councilors.

In response to a question from the Board, Director Robinson stated that the fact sheet and Why State Certification Matters were public information so it could be made available at the Library for the patrons' information. Director Robinson stated she would send both documents to the Board should they wish to share it with anyone who was interested.

The Board discussed the draft of the letter they wanted to send to the City Councilors.

The Board agreed the first paragraph would state their concern over the budget cuts and how it would affect the Library. The second paragraph would address the size of the budget cut, the loss of state certification, and the ramifications. The final paragraph would discuss the vital role the Library plays for the City of Peabody.

President Najjar gathered all of the input and suggestions provided by the Board and worked on a rough draft of the letter. President Najjar stated she would write the final draft of the letter and would have it ready to send if necessary on Friday after Director Robinson spoke with Mayor Bettencourt.

President Najjar stated that the letter needed to go on letterhead and they could not use Library letterhead for that purpose and the Trustees did not have their own letterhead. As that was the case, Trustee Jean Ahearn mocked up three versions of potential letterhead for the Trustees, all of which had the city seal and their names. The Board reviewed the options and chose one for use for the letter. President Najjar thanked Trustee Ahearn for designing the letterhead for them.

#### **DISCUSSION OF CHANGES TO THE CITY CHARTER**

Trustee Ahearn reported that she looked into whether or not George Peabody had requested the Library Trustees serve a six-year term as had been discussed at a previous meeting. Trustee Ahearn stated she could not find any information on the matter.

Library Director Robinson reported the Library archivist had also looked into the issue and didn't find any information either.

A **MOTION** was made by Richard Shruhan to table further discussion on the changes to the city charter. The motion was seconded by Frances Bisazza-Gallugi. A vote was taken.

All in Favor: Yes. Any Opposed: No. The motion was unanimously approved.

#### **New Business**

A **MOTION** was made by Richard Shruhan to release the funds for the tuition reimbursement of \$500 to Sharon Janus. The motion was seconded by Frances Bisazza-Gallugi. A vote was taken.

All in Favor: Yes. Any Opposed: No. The motion was unanimously approved.

A **MOTION** was made by Thomas Pappas to approve the disbursement of the State Aid for FY19 as outlined by the Library Director's report.

Utilities	\$5,000	8%
Operating	\$12,000	16%
Books	\$13,400	20%
Audubon	\$11,000	18%
Programs	\$10,000	16%
Building	\$8,600	14%
Public Technology	\$5,000	8%

The motion was seconded by Richard Shruhan. A vote was taken.

All in Favor: Yes. Any Opposed: No. The motion was unanimously approved.

A **MOTION** was made by Jean Ahearn that the Board of Trustees not hold meetings in the months of July and August 2019, unless there was a special meeting called by the President of the Board. The motion was seconded by Richard Shruhan.

All in Favor: Yes. Any Opposed: No. The motion was unanimously approved.

A **MOTION** was made by Jean Ahearn to move the September Board of Trustees meeting to Monday, September 9<sup>th</sup> at 7pm due to a holiday conflict. The motion was seconded by Frances Bisazza-Gallugi. A vote was taken.

All in Favor: Yes. Any Opposed: No. The motion was unanimously approved.

As there was no additional business to come before the Board, a **MOTION** to adjourn was made by Jean Ahearn. The motion was seconded by Dianne Caputo. A vote was taken.

All in Favor: Yes. Any Opposed: No. The motion was unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15pm.

Submitted by,

*Allison M. Lytle*

Allison M. Lytle  
Recording Secretary